

THE EFFECTS OF RACE, ECONOMICS, AND MILLENNIALS ON VOTING PATTERNS IN MISSISSIPPI

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ABSTRACT:

This thesis applies Bill Bishop's Big Sort theory to sixteen Mississippi counties. The goal is to determine whether Bishop's theory is applicable to Southern states like Mississippi. Based on Mississippi's unique political history, background on the Deep South's move from Solid Democrat to Solid Republican is included. Research necessary to understand the implications of the data including education, poverty, population density, religion, and race are also included. The Mississippi county data is sourced from Presidential voting records from 2004 and 2008, the United States Census Bureau, and the Association of Religion Data Archives. Using 16 Mississippi counties as a testing group, binary correlations and linear regression patterns show that while Bishop's argument might be applicable in metropolitan areas, the older stories of race, economics, and age matter most in a rural state like Mississippi.

“There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution.” – John Adams¹

¹ John Adams to Jonathon Jackson, October 2, 1780, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

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DEFINITIONS:

Dealignment – a trend or process where a large portion of the electorate abandons its previous party without developing a new one to replace it

Realignment- the coming to power for several decades of a new coalition, replacing an old dominant coalition of the other parties; seen after 1962 when the South gradually shifted to Republican at local levels then in national levels beginning in the 1980s and 1990s

Solid South – 1880-1948; voters nearly unanimously supported the Democratic Party because they viewed Republicans as pro-union, responsible for Reconstruction, and advocates of Jim Crow laws

Landslide – an electoral victory by 20 points or more

Deep South – includes South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana

Periphery South- Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Florida, and Texas

Reapportionment – After each census, the population is divided to show how many citizens should be included in each of the 435 congressional districts across the United States. Each state is given at least one district, while the remaining districts are given depending on the remaining population (“The Difference Between Redistricting and Reapportionment”).

Partisan polarization – “a sorting by which ideologies find a political home in one of the two major parties in the United States” (Gelman 113-114)

Opinion radicalization – “People gravitate away from the political center toward more extreme positions on issues. That is, on any given issue, people could come to hold more diverse opinions.” (Gelman 114)

Issue alignment – “The more that issue positions correlate with each other, the more we can say that liberals and conservatives are in opposite camps. In contrast, if issue positions are uncorrelated, a set of cross-cutting cleavages exist, and divisions are less clear.” (Gelman 114)

INTRODUCTION:

“People don’t need to check voting records to know the political flavor of a community. They can smell it,” wrote Bill Bishop in *The Big Sort* in 2008. Mass media commonly refers to the polarization of Congress, but in recent years, political scientists studied the levels of polarization among voters. Bishop argues that communities within states are becoming more polarized in their voting patterns as politically like-minded people gather together. While Bishop contends that the migration to like-minded communities is a mostly unconscious choice, the political ideologies and cultural associations of the citizens of these communities are growing ever more distinct (Bishop 5-6). As the separation of like-minded individuals into communities continues, political leaders and their ideologies are also becoming more distinct, and the levels of moderates are shrinking (Bullock 13). This divide is becoming increasingly important in elections based on the number of landslide communities it creates.² As of 1976, fewer than 25 percent of Americans lived in landslide communities. As of 2014, almost 50 percent of Americans lived in landslide communities (Bishop 6).

But what does this level of self-segregation mean for the political climate of the United States? According to Bishop, the lessening of moderate voters has proven detrimental to the political culture of the United States where consensus on political, social, and economic issues has become increasingly more difficult and seemingly impossible in some cases (Bullock 14). Marketing analyst Walker Smith summarizes the concern associated with self-segregation. Smith writes, “They are finding community groups that fit their values – where they don’t have to live with neighbors or community

² There is no set definition for a landslide victory. In this case, landslide counties are defined as a candidate winning the county by 20 points or more (Bethesda).

groups that might force them to compromise their principles or their tastes” (Bullock 14). In other words, the shrinking levels of moderate voters can be partially explained by growing levels of party loyalty (Bullock 12). For example, when Nixon won the South in 1972, less than 20 percent of Southern citizens called themselves Republican. In the 2004 presidential election, 43 percent of Southern citizens called themselves Republican (Bullock 12). These numbers are mimicked by African American identification with the Democratic party, with over 90 percent of the African American votes in the South going to Obama in 2008 (Bullock 13).

The racial divide in voting in Mississippi mimics the South as a whole with whites voting overwhelmingly for Republican candidates in national elections and black voters identifying and voting for Democrats. This divide was not always the case in Mississippi. Prior to 1948, white voters identified significantly with the Democratic Party while black citizens voted largely, when allowed, for the Republican candidate. From the 1976 presidential election forward, the Republican presidential candidate has carried the state’s votes. Furthermore, Mississippi has not seen a Democratic U.S. Senator since 1988 (Bullock 89). However, while the state slowly shifted to solid Republican in national elections, Democrats remained competitive in local and statewide elections, even though only one Democrat has won statewide office in the last 10 years (Bullock 89). Democrats now need a portion of white liberals and an overwhelming majority of African American voters to carry an election (Bullock 99). This paper will explore the historical political movements that lead to a Republican-dominated Mississippi and its affects on the political ideologies of citizens within the state. From

there, the paper will test whether Bishop's self-segregation theory is a driving force in Mississippi voting patterns.

PURPOSE:

While Bishop's research covers the overarching effects of polarization in the United States, no similar research exists on Mississippi and its communities. The purpose of this study is to do a macro level evaluation of Mississippi citizen's voting patterns in the 2004 and 2008 Presidential elections to see if the counties voting patterns match their demographics. I will test Bishop's hypothesis within Mississippi using voting records of 16 counties from the 2004 and 2008 Presidential elections. These counties were at least six points above or below the average vote in the elections. My data will show which predictors caused the extremes within these counties and analyze whether they match with Bishop's sorting hypothesis as well as predictors explored in other readings discussed in chapter two.

The history of Mississippi voting patterns is central to understanding the future of the political climate of the state. In the end, politics are connected to the exercise of power. How politicians exercise that power affects the three million citizens of Mississippi ("Population Estimates"). The politicians voted into office affect the funding of school systems, jobs generated in the state, highway maintenance, and social welfare programs needed by the ever growing amount of citizens below poverty level in the state (Nash XIV). Applying the Big Sort theory to Mississippi allows one to analyze the current condition of the state while researching the potential effects of landslide communities.

CHAPTER ONE: THE MOVE TO A ONE-PARTY SOUTH

To understand the current political climate of Mississippi, one must also understand the South's unique political history. The South, for most of its history, was a one-party political system. Prior to 1948, it earned the title "The Solid South" for its consistent support of the Democratic Party.³ Nearly 60 years later, the South is almost solidly Republican. The shift was gradual. During the early 1900s, Southern voters labeled Republicans as the party of unions and Reconstruction (Bullock 90). With minor exceptions, the majority of African American voters in the South identified as Republicans based on its reputation as the "Party of Lincoln." The majority of white Southerners, with the exception of Mountain Southerners in Tennessee who opposed the initial split from the Union during the Civil War, were solid Democrats. During this era, a Democratic one-party system flourished (Bullock 90). Democratic incumbents, with little opposition from Republican candidates, were easily re-elected each year. The rising number of incumbents increased seniority for Southern members of Congress. As a result, the Congress channeled more federal money into agricultural production in the South, and rural communities were given more funds than cities where African Americans were more prominent (Black 15-19). At the state level, malapportionment favored rural districts at the expense of burgeoning cities.

³ The area remained almost totally Democratic in its voting patterns from 1877 to 1950, with voting records ranging as high as 95 percent of state and local elections in the South going to Democratic candidates (Billington 179).

Divisions arose within the Democratic Party following the Great Depression. Southern Democrats accepted Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal response to the Great Depression initially; however, they adamantly opposed the idea of desegregation or broader civil rights protections under federal legislation. In other words, Southern Democrats supported some federal intervention when necessary in economic issues but believed social issues should be left to state legislatures. Northern Democrats and Southern Democrats argued over federal intervention, with Northern Democrats supporting more federal intervention than their Southern counterparts. During the second New Deal era, Republicans and Southern Democrats joined together in Congress as the Conservative Coalition to oppose any further programs. The coalition sought to prevent any further social legislation that would benefit minority groups ("The Civil Rights Movement and The Second Reconstruction"). Northern Democrats, in contrast, voiced their support of desegregation and labor unions (Bullock 90). Furthermore, Roosevelt's policies drew some Northern African American voters to the Democratic Party, broadening the division between Northern Democrats and segregationists in the South. This, in combination with fears of federal intervention in states' rights issues, caused a decrease in party unity among Democrats across the United States (King, Sept. 15). Southern Democrats and Republicans, who believed the focus of the New Deal legislature had moved from economic recuperation to reform, grew closer. The parties joined forces to oppose any reform legislation proposed including the Wagner Act, Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Farm and Tenant Housing Act (King, Sept. 15).

By 1948, the coalition between Southern Democrats and Republicans weakened as the ideals on race and labor diverged between the two groups. As the Northern states

grew stronger in industry, the move for collective bargaining and unions grew. The South, which remained largely agricultural and unorganized, strongly opposed the growth of labor unions. While the groups separated on economic issues, race would become a larger partition between conservative Southern Democrats and Republicans in national elections.

The 1948 election became known as the “dealignment election” for the South. Harry Truman ran on a Democratic ticket and made committees for civil rights and the desegregation of Armed Forces and federal workspaces. Strom Thurmond, who obstinately opposed integration, ran on a States’ Rights ticket, creating the Dixiecrat Party. Thurmond gained support largely in the Deep South where white citizens feared losing incumbent status if the large populations of African Americans gained voting rights. In Mississippi, for example, the majority of African American citizens were still unable to vote in elections (Nash 12). The periphery South, however, had smaller African American populations and voted for Truman based on their concern for economics over civil rights issues (Lublin 140-141). The majority of the United States was also moving away from racially driven voting patterns, and the Deep South’s Democrat’s inability to recognize this change would lead to further dealignment within the Democratic Party (Nash 13).

By 1952, Mississippi citizens began to shift more to the Republican Party in national elections, with 40 percent of Mississippi voters going to Republican candidate Dwight Eisenhower in the presidential election (Nash 36). By the late 1950s to early 1960s, Mississippi seemed to match its neighbors in the move away from the Democratic Party in national elections. In 1962, Mississippi garnered national attention when Ross

Barnett, the governor, publicly opposed James Meredith's attempts to enroll in the University of Mississippi (Nash 17-21). Following this event, President Kennedy placed Mississippi's government under a microscope on national television while voicing his support for Meredith's enrollment (Nash 20-21). Shortly after Meredith's enrollment, Barry Goldwater announced his candidacy for president on a Republican ticket. Goldwater, who openly opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, won the entirety of the Deep South. This move against the Civil Rights Act by a Republican nominee forever alienated much of the African American population from the Republican Party (Lublin 140-141). Mississippi voters saw the Republican Party transitioning from the "Party of Lincoln" to the "Party of Goldwater."

Following the Voting Rights Act of 1965, many white incumbents feared losing their positions in predominately African American counties. In an effort to maintain the status quo, the Mississippi state legislature used reapportionment⁴ and "multimember districts." Reapportionment funneled African American voters into combined districts that contained a majority of white voters in an effort to defeat any chance of an African American representative (Nash 101-102). According to Nash, "The reapportionment plan enacted by the 1966 legislature... was so successful that in the 1967 elections only one African American was elected to the 174-member legislature that served a state with a 42 percent black population" (Nash 102).

By 1973, 78.2 percent of Mississippians voted for Richard Nixon, the Republican candidate, in the presidential election (Nash 52). The white voters' admonition of federal

⁴ After each census, the population is divided to show how many citizens should be included in each of the 435 congressional districts across the United States. Each state is given at least one district, while the remaining districts are given depending on the remaining population ("The Difference Between Redistricting and Reapportionment").

Democrats' "liberal" actions accounted for much of this voting shift. However, while white Southern voters became increasingly more Republican in national elections, they remained loyal to Democrats in state and local elections (King, Sept. 17). Connecting ideology with party affiliation helped the Republican Party win over white Southern voters. Beginning in 1972, Mississippi voted for Republican Presidential candidate Richard Nixon, and with the exception of 1976, this Republican trend has continued ever since (Bullock 90). During Nixon's presidency, the Republican Party became associated with religion, family, and patriotism. Conservatives within institutions, like the Southern Baptist Convention, also slowly moved toward the Republican Party while more "liberal" Republicans moved toward the Democratic Party in a large realignment (Black 248-250). According to Nash, "By 1984, Republicans would proudly proclaim themselves conservative while Democrats were stuck with the liberal label. While those words would take on different meaning with different people, they gradually began to signify where the two parties stood on a broad range of cultural issues. And for better or for worse, the overwhelming majority of white Mississippians are 'conservative' on all of them" (Nash 7). As white Southern citizens voted for more Republican candidates, the Democratic advantage in congressional districts also shrunk and the excitement surrounding Nixon's election carried over into state elections, helping lead to the election of Mississippi Republican senators Thad Cochran and Trent Lott (Bullock 90).

Following the Watergate-era induced retrenchment, Ronald Reagan's election in 1984 reenergized and solidified the South's move to the Republican Party at the national level. His election brought influential evangelicals to the party and reinforced the connection of conservative ideology with the Republican Party. Throughout his

presidency, liberalism gained a negative connotation for Republicans and claiming the title of Republican became not only acceptable but also popular in the deep and periphery South for white voters. The “liberal” and “conservative” labels placed on the Democratic and Republican parties during this era carried over into voter ideology on cultural topics (Nash 7). While the move to a Republican South was solidified at the national level, the trend never fully transferred to local voting patterns, as Democratic candidates still remain competitive in House and local elections in Mississippi (Bullock 89).

Party Identification Changes in Statewide and Local Elections in Mississippi

In Mississippi, the move to a two-party state was slow. In 1892, the constitutional convention in Mississippi voted to disenfranchise African American voters by implementing a \$2 poll tax, a two-year citizenship requirement, and a literacy test (Nash 96-97). This disenfranchisement narrowed the amount of registered African American voters from 67 percent to six percent in only 14 years (Nash 97). Even with the low percentage of African American voters, white Southern Democrats pushed for further legal disenfranchisement (Nash 97). By 1902, the state allowed an executive committee to prohibit any citizens from voting in a primary, sanctioning only white male voters as eligible voters in primaries (Nash 97-98). This practice was allowed until 1944 when the Supreme Court ruled that the primary restrictions were unconstitutional in *Smith v. Allwright* (Nash 98). However, the effects of disenfranchisement continued years after the practice was overturned in Mississippi. By 1965, only 28,500 of 422,000 African American adults were registered (Nash 98). The low registration number was due largely to entrance forms required to become a registered voter. The forms, which contained 20 questions, included portions of writing and subjective interpretations of the Constitution.

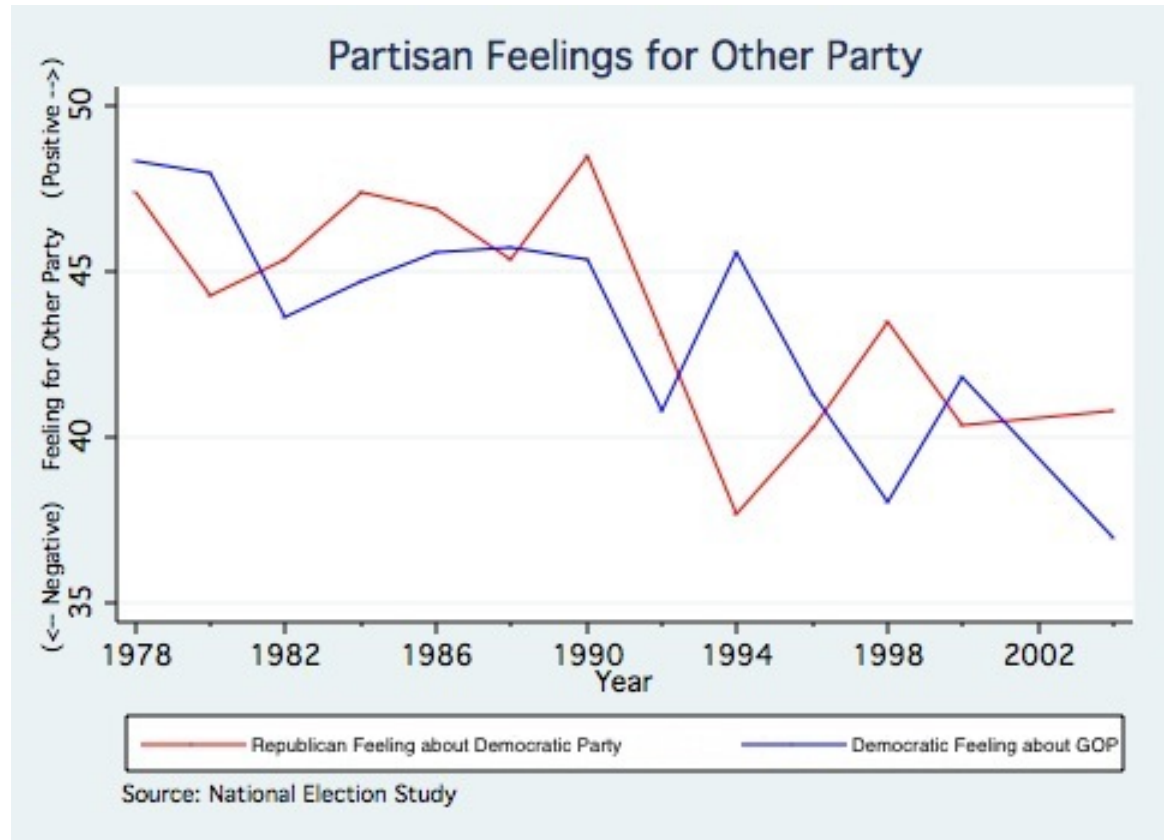
In some cases, the forms were simply not given to African American citizens who inquired for them (Nash 98). The divide between whites and African Americans furthered by disenfranchisement was felt greater in some counties. For example, as of 1964, Issaquena County, a part of the Mississippi Delta region, registered 100 percent of eligible white voters while no eligible African American voters were included in voter registration polls (Nash 99).

As the civil rights movement gained momentum in the 1960s, Mississippi's one-party system started to waver. The passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 brought in new African American voters in Mississippi elections. To fight the effects of the Voting Rights Act, the Mississippi legislature used reapportionment to redraw district lines to benefit the white electorate. The effects of the reapportionment were evident in the representation of the state. In 1967, only one African American was voted into the legislature of a 174-person legislature, only slightly over .5 percent representation, even though African American voters made up 42 percent of Mississippi (Nash 102).

The Republican Party's growth in votes in the South translated into evolved "psychological identifications" for party members. Where Mississippians once viewed the Republican Party as Lincoln's liberal party, the Republican Party is now a favorite with white Mississippians for its "conservative values," ability to "reduce crime," and "maintain traditional values" (Bullock 96, 99). These evolved party identifications caused divisions between voters on both sides. For example, to gauge voter polarization, Gelman used the "feeling thermometer" to uncover how voters view opposing political parties. Viewpoints of the opposite parties have grown increasingly negative over the

past 40 years (Gelman 112-123). Table 1-A, collected by the National Election Study, displays the growth of negative feelings among voters for their rival party.

Table 1-A: Decline in Positive Feelings for Rival Political Parties



Source: Cost “Real Clear Politics”

According to Gelman, while voters are less content with their opposing parties as an entity, most American voters still remain moderate on the majority of issues the parties represent (Gelman 136). However, as the Democratic and Republican parties took ownership of certain social issues, citizens were pressured to take political sides or become alienated from the political process (Gelman 136,168). Furthermore, Republican states, like Mississippi, were more likely to have two senators on the right side of most issues and more Republican congressional districts (Gelman 130).

Taking cues from national campaigns, Mississippi Republicans continued the “conservative” versus “liberal” message in their statewide election campaigns. GOP chairman Brad White, for example, voiced his opposition to Obama’s campaign in 2008 by stating that Obama “would not do anything but raise taxes for all of us – except the people who don’t pay taxes” (Bullock 94). With the increased popularity of the Republican Party in Mississippi, Democrats have increasingly lost white voters, with over 68 percent of white Mississippians identifying as Republican. For instance, in 2008, 88 percent of white Mississippians supported John McCain (“Mississippi Election Results”). The Democratic Party has, however, remained strong among African American Mississippians, garnering almost 80 percent of their average votes (Bullock 96). The racial political divide described above is seen in Mississippi’s political behavior with the large African American population increasing the state’s liberalism (Bullock 111). The Mississippi legislature has overruled some strictly conservative policies with the help of Democratic leaders, keeping Mississippi from becoming a truly GOP dominated state (Bullock 111).

The Slow Move to Republican Domination in Southern House Elections

From 1986 to 1990, the rise of Republican voters in national elections in the South was not matched in statewide election results. The U.S. House was locked in a battle between long-held Democrats and rising Republicans. While the Voting Rights Act of 1965 legally gave African American citizens the right to vote, many were still located within a district with a white majority, giving their votes little impact (Steed 10). When redrawing its districts, every ten years as mandated by *Baker v. Carr* in 1962, the

Mississippi legislators utilized multimember districts⁵ (Nash 101-102). The legislature essentially packed numerous districts with large numbers of African American voters into one combined voting district, causing higher levels of white majorities in the remaining counties within the state (Nash 102). As of 1991, African Americans made up 20 of 122 House seats and two of 52 Senate seats. These numbers did not seem representative of a state with a 36 percent African American population, and African American political leaders advocated for new district lines (Nash 235). In response, the Department of Justice placed Mississippi, along with eight other Southern states, under mandatory reapportionment measures. Under these measures, majority-minority⁶ districts were encouraged. African American voters were moved into majority African American voting districts, making the election of a Democratic nominee in these districts easier (McKee 8). With the move of African Americans from other districts, however, Republicans began to pick up seats in the House (McKee 9). While the majority-minority districts allowed Republicans to gain more seats in the House, the Democrats in Southern states, including Mississippi, largely suffered. With the high levels of Democratic Party identification among African American voters, the more diluted these voters were among districts, the more competitive the districts became for Republican candidates (McKee 74-75). As of 2016, the U.S. Mississippi House delegation is made up of three Republican representatives and one democratic representative. The divide between republican and democratic votes within the districts is distinct. For example, in the 2nd

⁵ “Packing occurs when potential voters with similar expected voting behavior are deliberately concentrated into fewer congressional districts” (“Congressional Districts” 5).

⁶ To follow stipulations of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, some states, like Mississippi, were required to make majority-minority districts. In these districts, the minority race makes up the majority of the voting population (Whitacker 2).

District election, Democrat Bennie Thompson won 66.8 percent to 29.4 percent while Republican Gregg Harper won 66.3 percent to 30.3 percent in the 3rd District election (“2016 Mississippi House Election Results”).

Implications of Republican Ascendancy in Mississippi

As the percentage of Republican congressmen continues to rise in Mississippi, and the South as a whole, political races have moved their financial focus to more competitive states. While the movement of national campaigns out of Mississippi is one disadvantage of having a one-party system, the system also generates problems among the Republican Party members within the state. The one-party system has caused a divide among Republican voters in Mississippi who identify as “Thad Cochran Republicans” or “Tate Reeves” Republicans (King Oct. 1).

The move to a one-party system has also created the need for an overwhelming white majority for Republicans to win elections within the South, including Mississippi. Republicans now need over 70 percent of white voters to win the election because the conservative connotations of the party do not fit the desires of minority voters. While increasing conservatism appeals to the white voters in the South, the rising levels of conservatism displayed by the Republican Party continues to alienate more moderate voters (King Oct. 1).

Current Mississippi Statistics

Mississippi’s citizens are 57.3 percent white and 37.5 percent African American. The state has been classified as “safe Republican” in national elections (Montanaro). In Mississippi as a whole, the population dropped 1,746 from 2014 to 2015. Mississippi is ranked 50th in overall income level with the average Mississippi citizen making \$37,790

per year. Mississippi also ranks 38th in college degree level graduates (“Graduation Rates by State”). Combined, these statistics affect Mississippi’s political structure. The lower education levels increase poverty, and citizens are more reliant on aid. The viscous cycle continues, as lower college levels equal fewer jobs in the state and smaller amounts of the population paying taxes. With little taxes to improve conditions, Mississippi fails to attract more people to migrate to the state (“Population Estimates”).

Religiosity in Mississippi

While religiosity and religious adherence has decreased in the United States as a whole, with 92 percent of Americans saying they believed in God in 2007 shrinking to 89 percent in 2014, according to the Pew Research Center, Mississippi tied with Alabama for the most religious state. Forty-nine percent of those surveyed attend weekly worship services (Lipka). Mississippi is made up of 41 percent evangelical Protestants, 12 percent mainline Protestants, and 24 percent African American Protestants (Wormald). Charles Bullock explores the difference between evangelical and mainline Protestants (Bullock 293). While all Protestant groups were overwhelmingly Democrat during the Solid South era, mainline Protestants were more likely to prefer Republican candidates than their evangelical counterparts (Bullock 294-295). However, adherent evangelicals were a large push in the move of the South from a solid Democratic South to a Republican South. Beginning in the 1960s, adherent evangelicals began to shift away from the Democratic Party in Presidential elections with slightly more than 50 percent voting for Republican candidates during this decade (Bullock 299-303). By the early 2000s, this percentage had moved to over 80 percent (Bullock 303). This Republican shift among adherent evangelicals was slower in statewide elections with their votes going mostly to

Democratic candidates until the 1990s (Bullock 303). Now, evangelical Protestants are the most consistent religious voting block for the Republican Party.

Laura Olson lists other religions of influence, citing African-American Protestants, Jews, and Catholics as generally more liberal in ideology (Olson 455). Olson also notes that the traditional understanding of religious groups can no longer be used in a description of the divide among religious voters. Her research points to a divide within religious communities themselves following World War II. This divide occurred between conservative and liberal attitudes toward religion (Olson 455). Until 1992, Olson found little connection religious adherence and voting patterns (Olson 456). Religious adherents voted slightly more frequently for Nixon and Reagan, but the gap was not large enough to cause a trend in national voting (Olson 456). While Reagan did begin to draw religious voters to the GOP with his campaign, a large trend was not found in citizens' voting patterns toward Republicans until the next decade (Olson 456). Beginning in the 1980s, evangelical Protestants moved largely to the GOP (Olson 456). While voters were previously more divided among denomination lines, voters are now divided by religious adherence (Campbell 1). For example, religious adherent voters are likely to vote for the Republican candidate (Campbell 1). This divide among adherents and less adherent voters started largely with Jimmy Carter's focus on church attendance over denomination in his Presidential campaign in 1976 (Campbell 2). In the 1980s, Republican candidates followed in Democrat Carter's footsteps and began to include religious adherence in their campaigns. Slowly, religious adherence became associated with the Republican Party (Campbell 2). Reagan would further the connection between religion and the GOP with his campaign in 1980, and George W. Bush continued the

trend by drawing in conservatives from non-Christian traditions in his presidential campaigns (Campbell 2).

The divide between religious adherents and less adherent and non-religious voters became increasingly apparent in the 2004 presidential election between George W. Bush and John Kerry. In this election, adherents and less adherent or non-religious voters were almost evenly divided at the polls. Weekly adherents made up 42.8 percent and less adherent and non-adherents combined made up 43.3 percent of the votes (Olson 457). Of the weekly adherents, almost 65 percent voted for Bush. Likewise, voters who never attended religious programs votes almost 64 percent for Kerry (Olson 457). The votes among more moderate attendees were significantly less divided, with the votes being divided by less than one percent between the two candidates (Olson 457). George W. Bush continued to connect the Republican Party with conservative politics, drawing on social concerns of conservative religious groups, including abortion and gay marriage (Guth). Bush also connected his adherence to the Methodist faith with social issues in the campaign, drawing in much of the evangelical religious groups. John Kerry also used religion in his campaign but in a much less productive manner. Kerry would eventually begin to link his Catholic faith and liberal ideologies, specifically his pro-choice identification, but his religious campaign only drew in some mainline Protestants and Catholics (Guth). More traditional Catholics followed Pope John Paul II's condemnation of abortion, while Kerry ran on a pro-choice platform. Of adherent Catholics, 42 percent are strictly opposed to abortion under any circumstances while 10 percent of less adherent Catholics are opposed to abortion in any circumstance (Schneider). The 2004 election also showed a trend in voting patterns in the South as a whole. As a whole, John

Green cited religion as a key factor in Bush's sweep of the Southern states in the 2004 presidential election, with white Protestants being the most Republican voters (Green 120). Table 1-B shows the South's voting records in the 2004 presidential election, with adherent evangelicals voting overwhelmingly for Bush, and black Protestants voting overwhelmingly for Kerry.

Table 1-B: South's Voting Records in 2004 Presidential Election

	Bush	Kerry
Adherent Evangelicals	83.9	16.1
Mainline Protestants	81.4	18.6
Black Protestants	14.5	85.5
Catholics	70.2	29.8

Source: Data taken from 2004 National Election Pool in *The Faith Factor*, reformatted into table form

According to Green, these voting patterns show a divide in ideology among adherent and less adherent voters. More adherent voters have more conservative or moderate views than their less adherent counterparts (Olson 457). Over 47 percent of weekly adherents identified Republican and around 32 percent identified as Democrat (Olson 458). With all of the movement of religious adherents toward the Republican Party, African American voters devotion levels have not led to more GOP voters in this community (Campbell 2). As evidenced in the 2004 election, black Protestants in the South voted overwhelmingly for Kerry.

Overall, the voting patterns among less adherent evangelicals are less distinct than the voting patterns of more adherent evangelicals. Although less adherent evangelicals still frequently vote for Republican candidates, they do so on a less

overwhelming basis (Bullock 303). African American Protestants have proved to be the strongest hold for the Democratic Party in the South (Bullock 304). While secular voters have proven beneficial for Democratic nominees in the South as a whole, the small percentage of secular voters in Mississippi seems to keep this group from gaining much momentum against the Republican Party (Bullock 305).

Poverty Levels in Mississippi

According to U.S. Census Bureau Data for 2015, Mississippi is the poorest state in the nation with a median income of \$39, 665 per year (US Census 2015). In poorer states, voters link economic issues to political party, with class divisions mattering more in poor states than rich states (Gelman 132-133). On average, poor states go to Republicans, with this trend steadily increasing over the years (Gelman 165). However, within the poor state, richer voters vote more steadily for Republican candidates (Gelman 165) with the richer voters having more conservative views on economics than their lower income counterparts (Gelman 167). Within richer states, richer citizens vote largely on moral issues; however, within poorer states, economic issues remain the most prominent dividing issue among voters with the largest voting gap occurring among rich and poor voters in Republican states (Gelman 173- 177).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE

The “Big Sort” Question

In his research of the United States, Bill Bishop argues that communities within states are becoming more polarized in their voting patterns as politically like-minded people gather in certain areas of the state. Bishop reasons that the migration to like-minded communities is a mostly unconscious choice, but as the communities continue to grow ever more alike, the political ideologies of these groups become more distinct (Bishop 5-6). Younger voters, for example, commonly move from small towns to larger industrialized areas after graduating from university, filtering higher levels of education and economy out of poorer agricultural states into a handful of metropolitan areas (Bullock 7-8). This divide is becoming increasingly important in elections based on the number of landslide communities it creates. As of 1976, fewer than 25 percent of Americans lived in landslide communities. By 2014, almost 50 percent of Americans lived in landslide communities (Bishop 6).

The migration seems counterintuitive to Bishop. With an increased ability to travel through new technologies, one would expect levels of segregation to decrease. However, levels of self-segregation are increasingly apparent (Bullock 11-12). These levels of self-segregation are changing the makeup of political society. As segregation within states continues, political leaders and their ideologies are becoming more distinct, and the levels of moderates are shrinking (Bullock 13). Marketing analyst Walker Smith explains the potential problems of like-minded communities. Smith states, “They are

finding communities that fit their values – where they don’t have to live with neighbors or community groups that might force them to compromise their principles or their tastes” (Bullock 14). The lower numbers of moderate voters have proven problematic to the political culture of the United States as a whole where consensus on political, social, and economic issues has become increasingly more difficult and seemingly impossible in some cases (Bullock 14).

Red, Blue, and Purple America

The difficulty to find moderate ground is highlighted in the increased levels of majorities at the state level in presidential elections. The past five presidential elections were closer than any other elections in the past 100 years at the national level (Teixeira 50). While the elections are growing closer in national elections, local majorities are steadily increasing at the state level. Prior to 1976, American voters “were likely to live, work, and worship with many people who supported a different political party” (Teixeira 51). During this time, only 26 percent of voters lived in counties that were landslides in presidential elections. After 1976, Republicans and Democrats grew increasingly segregated. Thirty years later, approximately 48 percent of American voters lived in landslide counties (Teixeira 51).

The landslide county trend represents a larger move by Americans who “have had unprecedented physical and economic mobilities” (Teixeira 52). This mobility, rather than decreasing segregation, seems to have created “a new kind of political isolation” (Teixeira 52). The clustering of like-minded individuals would not be concerning in one neighborhood or even one state alone; however, the clustering has proven to be a broad occurrence across the United States (Teixeira 52). The levels of self-segregation

currently seen grew largely in the 1990s with white citizens moving in increased numbers to growing metropolitan areas (Teixeira 53). This movement caused a decrease in college growth rates in rural areas (Teixeira 53). For example, Cleveland experienced a 10 percent growth rate in college graduation rates from 1970 to 2004, while other cities, like Austin, increased at rates 18 percent higher (Teixeira 53-54). This gap is due in part to the flock of recent graduates that moved from rural areas to higher populated cities. As of 2000, rural areas, on average, had half the amount of college graduates as urban areas (Teixeira 54). The greater concentration of college graduates in large cities led to more technological growth and more apparent levels of segregation based on income (Teixeira 53-54). The higher income areas within the cities drew in more immigrants from rural areas and states, causing the rural areas to lose the levels of education needed for economic growth (Teixeira 54).

The higher levels of technological growth in larger cities shaped their economies and social makeups. Citizens of more technological cities were more likely to “try anything once” and showed greater interest in politics and less interest in community activities (Teixeira 55). Those in less technologically driven cities were more likely to participate in community activities, to attend church, and to respect authority figures (Teixeira 55). Along with the differences in social activities, segregation within states also affected citizens’ political viewpoints. Citizens in technological cities were less likely to vote than their traditional colleagues but were more likely to participate in protests (Teixeira 55). Citizens within these larger communities were slightly more liberal than the national average prior to the large-scale immigrations in the 1990s but were emphatically more liberal than the national after the self-segregation occurred

(Teixeira 56). A similar trend was seen in less technologically advanced cities. As segregation intensified, the cities grew more conservative than they were prior to 1990 (Teixeira 56).

Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State

Between states, social concerns seem to drive political decisions; however, at the individual state level, the rich-poor divide propels political divisions in districts (Gelman 4-5). Within individual states, rich voters are largely concentrated in the Republican Party, and within richer class structures, voters are more divided on cultural issues than lower income voters (Gelman 6-9). The richer class' divisions on cultural issues are driven by the ability to move to a community that fits its lifestyles (Gelman 6). In poorer states, like Mississippi, income is still one of the greatest dividing factors in politics (Gelman 17). In Mississippi, for example, rich citizens were more likely to vote for George W. Bush than his democratic opponents. In richer states, richer citizens were more divided in their votes based on cultural ideologies (Gelman 17). The divide in Mississippi citizens' voting patterns based on income is mirrored in its divisions based on race (Gelman 17). In the South, richer counties vote more Republican and poorer counties vote more Democratic. The income divide matters more in states like Mississippi where poor voters are largely African American and richer voters are predominately white (Gelman 73-74). The poorer the state, the steeper the voting divide between races, and with Mississippi's current role as 50th in annual average income, the slope is becoming ever more steep ("America's Richest and Poorest States").

Religion, Race, or Income: Which Matters More?

According to Eitan Hersh and Claytong Nall's study of public voting records, the link between voting patterns and citizens' incomes is stronger in rural areas. In the Deep South⁷, for example, high levels of poverty and large African American populations contribute to the strength of income-party voting (Hersch, Nall). The more urbanized an area, the less correlation between income and voting was found. Mark Brewer and Jeffrey Stonecash also voiced their support for income's growing importance in voting patterns. Similar to Hersh and Nall, Brewer and Stonecash argue that income is the most divisive factor among voters, but histories of racial oppression intensify the separations created by income (Brewer, Stonecash). However, Hersch and Nall's research focuses largely on statewide election results and states that racial issues are more distinct in voting patterns than income at the local level.

In terms of partisan polarization, where conservative Democrats were once commonplace in the South, conservative is now commonly interchanged with Republican and liberal is associated with Democrats (Gelman 113-114). Beginning in 1970, the divide between Democrats and Republicans became more pronounced as conservative Republicans replaced moderates in Southern legislatures (Gelman 124). With the ideological changes, stances on certain social and economical issues diverged between Democrats and Republicans, but the divergence varies in proportion depending on the state. For example, if one compares the religiosity of states, the less religious states are more divided among party lines. In deeply religious states, such as Mississippi, the liberal

⁷ A group of five Southern states classified in Charles Bullock and Mark Rozell's *The New Politics of the Old South*. They are South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Florida, and Texas are considered periphery or rim states of the Deep South.

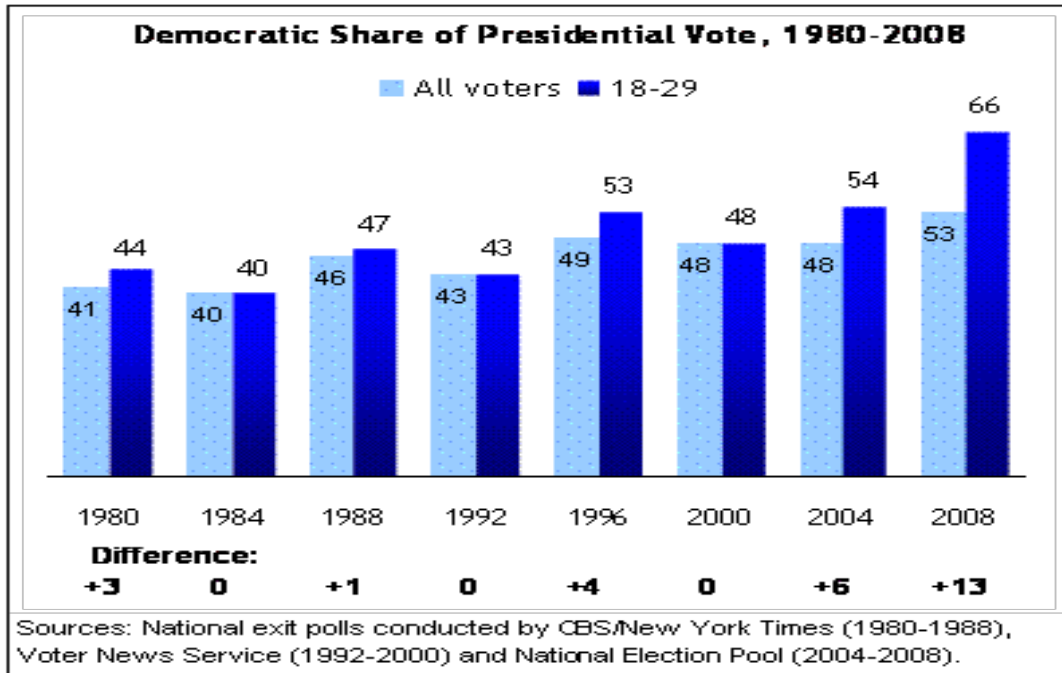
and conservative divide is less distinct (Gelman 130). While divides among party lines are less distinctive in religious states like Mississippi, divisions among economic classes are larger. In these religious states, poorer voters identify as liberal more than richer voters (Gelman 131). In richer states, the divide between rich and poor voters is not seen as much (Gelman 132). However, ideological issues have also become increasingly associated with political parties in the United States as a whole (Gelman 132). As Congress grows more polarized, American voters have also sorted themselves based on their ideological preferences (Gelman 132). The voters, however, can still not be separated into two distinct categories as divisions between classes within poor states remain (Gelman 132-133).

Millennials Matter

Barack Obama garnered the support of 66 percent of voters under 30 in the 2008 election, a larger split than any polling results since their inception in 1972 (Keeter). Obama's popularity among youth voters was moderately related to the growth in younger voters' connections with the Democratic Party over the past 20 years; however, Obama's popularity was also due in part to George W. Bush's disapproval ratings from the 2004 election. Directly influenced by the political climate of their childhood, youth voters associated Bush's presidency with a dismal economy and lower wages for college graduates. The general public's disapproval of the war in Iraq also played largely into younger generation's disapproval of Bush's presidency. Furthermore, while Bush's 2004 campaign drew in Evangelical Christian groups, marking the Republican Party as conservative alienated youth that were growing progressively more liberal on political issues (Fisher). Younger voters began to associate political liberalism, especially related

to the legalization of gay marriage, with the Democratic Party (Fisher). Table 2-A shows the increased support for the Democratic Party by young voters since 1980.

Table 2-A: Increase in the Youth Vote for Presidential Candidates Since 1980



Source: Young Voters in the 2008 Election by Pew Research

The trend of young voters to the Democratic Party moved from almost evenly split in 2000 to a 45 percent to 26 percent split between the parties in 2008. Younger voters in the Democratic Party matched Teixeira's theory in *Red, Blue and Purple America* that found correlation between more liberal ideologies and political activism.

While Obama did attract a large portion of the young vote in 2008, Anna Greenburg – Senior Vice President of Greenberg Quilán Rosner Research – argues that the trend of younger voters to the Democratic Party has taken place over 20 years. During this trend, the Republican Party became known to an increasingly diverse youth as the party of white voters. Furthermore, a downward spiral in the economy caused

youth voters to look unfavorably on Republican policies on economics that put affordable college farther out of reach (Greenburg 74-75).

2016 Presidential Divide

As of 1992, 39 percent of American citizens lived in landslide counties – counties won by a spread of 20 percent or more - in Presidential elections. By the 2016 Presidential election, 60 percent of citizens lived in landslide counties – “a 10-point increase from 2012” (Aisch). In their research, Gregor Aisch, Adam Pearce, and Karen Yourish credit almost the entire increase from 2012 to Republican citizens in rural portions of the country, such as Mississippi (Aisch).

CHAPTER THREE: COUNTY RESEARCH AND APPLICATION OF THE BIG SORT THEORY IN MISSISSIPPI

Based on the literature in chapter two, my research will focus on five main data points in Mississippi voting: race, poverty levels, population density, millennial votes, and religion. As the literature pointed to race and income as high determining factors in Mississippi voting records in the past, I compared the black populations within Mississippi counties voting percentages in the 2004 Presidential election as a starting point. This data point alone highlighted 16 counties with at least 6 percent spreads that were opposite from what one should expect based on their racial and economic makeups. The counties are Smith, George, Pearl River, Newton, Prentiss, Lauderdale, Tishomingo, Alcorn, Lafayette, Copiah, Yazoo, Benton, Washington, Quitman, Sunflower, and Coahoma. Using these 16 counties, I ran binary correlations and linear regression tests to see whether my five hypotheses affected voting patterns in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections to the levels expected according to the literature.

Ideally, my data would go to a more micro level within Mississippi including data from each precinct within a county. However, the data I was able to obtain compares Mississippi's voting at the county level as a whole. While my data is not all encompassing and future research needs to be done at the precinct-by-precinct level, a macro level study of Mississippi counties provides adequate information for determining whether counties are voting in the patterns described in *The Big Sort*.

Data for 16 Counties Tested

Smith County had a population of 15, 826 as of 2009. Of this population, 26.5 percent are 18 or under. 74.7 percent of the citizens are white, and 24.7 percent are black. The average household income is \$33, 318 with a population density of 25.4. Of its population, 6, 100 are religious adherents, 5, 368 are Evangelical Protestants, and 187 are black Protestants. 544 citizens are mainline Protestants, and there is no Catholic congregation in the county (ASARB, Houseal).

George County had a population of 22, 681 as of 2009. Of this population, 29.3 percent are 18 and under. 9.8 percent of the population is black, and 89.1 percent is white. The average household income is 43, 666 with a population density of 40.1. Of the 22,681, 11,613 citizens are religious adherents. Of the 11,613 adherents, 8,631 are Evangelical Protestants, 397 are black Protestants, and 1,970 citizens are mainline Protestants. 369 citizens are Catholics (ASARB, Houseal). Based on the literature of chapter two and its makeup, it can be predicted that George County will vote overwhelmingly for the Republican candidate in national elections. The county has an above average household income for the state as well as a white population that is almost 30 percent higher than the average white population of the state. Also, the large average of 74 percent evangelical Protestants is also more predictive of Republican votes. The higher than state average youth voters might keep the other demographics from swaying the state overwhelmingly Republican, but based on the high percentages of the other demographics, it can be expected that the county will be landslide Republican.

Pearl River had a population of 57,860 as of 2009. In the county, 25 percent of its citizens are 18 or under. 85 percent of the population is white, and 12.8 percent is black.

The average household income is 39,312 with a population density of 60. Of the population, 36,022 are religious adherents. 26,655 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 1,110 are black Protestants, and 1,918 are mainline Protestants. There are 4,079 Catholics citizens in the county (ASARB, Houseal). Based on the literature in chapter two, Pearl River should be slightly less Republican than George County based on its lower average household income level and lower white population.

Newton had a population of 22,658 as of 2009. Of this population, 25.9 percent is 18 or under. 64.5 percent of the population is white, and 30 percent is black. The average household income is 34,768 with a population density of 37.8. Of this population, 12,583 are religious adherents. 10,496 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 688 are black Protestants, and 1,277 are mainline Protestants. 121 citizens are Catholics (ASARB, Houseal).

Prentiss had a population of 25,709 as of 2009. Of this population, 23.3 percent is 18 or under. 84.5 percent of the population is white, and 14.2 percent is black. The average household income is 34,111 with a population density of 61.6. Of this population, 17,942 are religious adherents. 14,314 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 329 are black Protestants, and 2,821 are mainline Protestants. 70 citizens are Catholics (ASARB, Houseal).

Lauderdale had a population of 79,099 as of 2009. Of this population, 25.9 percent is 18 or under. 56.5 percent of the population is white, and 41.7 percent is black. The average household income is 36,822 with a population density of 111. Of this population, 57,533 are religious adherents. 37,626 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 8,498 are black Evangelicals, and 8,339 are mainline Protestants. There are 1,828

Catholics in the county (ASARB, Houseal). Lauderdale's demographics almost mirror the patterns of Mississippi's demographics as a whole. The white population is within three percent of the state average and the black population is within 4 percent of the state average. The average household income is only \$92 below the state average. Based on this information, Lauderdale's voting records in national elections should mirror the voting patterns of Mississippi as a whole.

Tishomingo had a population of 19,034 as of 2009. Of this population, 22.7 percent is 18 or under. 95.3 percent of the population is white, and 3.3 percent is black. The average household income is 33, 674 with a population density of 45.2. 10,190 are religious adherents. 8,266 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 243 are black Protestants, and 1,639 are mainline Protestants. 42 citizens are Catholic (ASARB, Houseal).

Alcorn had a population of 35,822 as of 2009. Of this population, 23.6 percent is 18 and under. 87 percent of the population is white, and 11.6 percent is black. The annual household income is 32, 119 with a population density of 86.4. Of its population, 24, 483 are religious adherents. 20, 184 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 906 are black Protestants, and 2,461 are mainline Protestants. 443 citizens are Catholic (ASARB, Houseal).

Lafayette had a population of 43,975 as of 2009. Of this population, 19 percent is 18 and under. 72.6 percent of the population is white, and 24.6 percent is black. The annual household income is 37,732 with a population density of 61.4. Of its population, 19, 129 are religious adherents. 9,194 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 2,393 are black Protestants, and 5,598 are mainline Protestants. 1,104 citizens are Catholic (ASARB, Houseal).

Copiah had a population of 29,094 as of 2009. Of this population, 26 percent is 18 and under. 47.5 percent of the population is white, and 51.7 percent is black. The annual household income is 33,699 with a population density of 37. Of its population, 18,355 are religious adherents. 12,630 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 2,231 are black Protestants, and 2,704 are mainline Protestants. 280 citizens are Catholics (ASARB, Houseal).

Yazoo had a population of 27,981 as of 2009. Of this population, 25 percent is 18 and under. 43.8 percent of the population is white, and 54.8 percent is black. The average household income is 30,087 with a population density of 30.6. Of its population, 13,109 are religious adherents. 7,773 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 2,486 are black Protestants, and 2,032 are mainline Protestants. 779 citizens are Catholics (ASARB, Houseal). Based on the literature, Yazoo's higher African American population and lower average income should make the county more Democratic.

Benton had a population of 7,981 as of 2009. Of this population, 25 percent is 18 and under. 63.6 percent of the population is white, and 35.1 percent is black. The average household income is 28,723 with a population density of 19.7. Of its population, 5,658 are religious adherents. 4,692 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 321 are black Protestants, and 337 are mainline Protestants. There is no Catholic congregation within the county (ASARB, Houseal).

Washington had a population of 54,616 as of 2009. Of this population, 29.1 percent is 18 and under. 30.1 percent of the population is white, and 67.7 percent is black. The average household income is 27,452 with a population density 87. Of its population, 33,193 are religious adherents. 19,793 citizens are Evangelical Protestants,

7,900 are black Protestants, and 2, 938 are mainline Protestants. 1, 893 citizens are Catholic (ASARB, Houseal). According to the literature presented in chapter two, Washington's higher African American population and lower than average household income should make the county more Democratic.

Quitman had a population of 8,391 as of 2009. Of this population, 27.5 percent is 18 and under. 29.3 percent of the population is white, and 69.5 percent is black. The average household income is 25, 407 with a population density of 25. Of its population, 6,777 are religious adherents. 3,126 are Evangelical Protestants, 1,335 are black Protestants, and 2,316 are mainline Protestants. There is no Catholic congregation in the county (ASARB, Houseal). Based on the literature in chapter two, Quitman should be slightly more Democratic than Washington based on its higher black population and lower average household income.

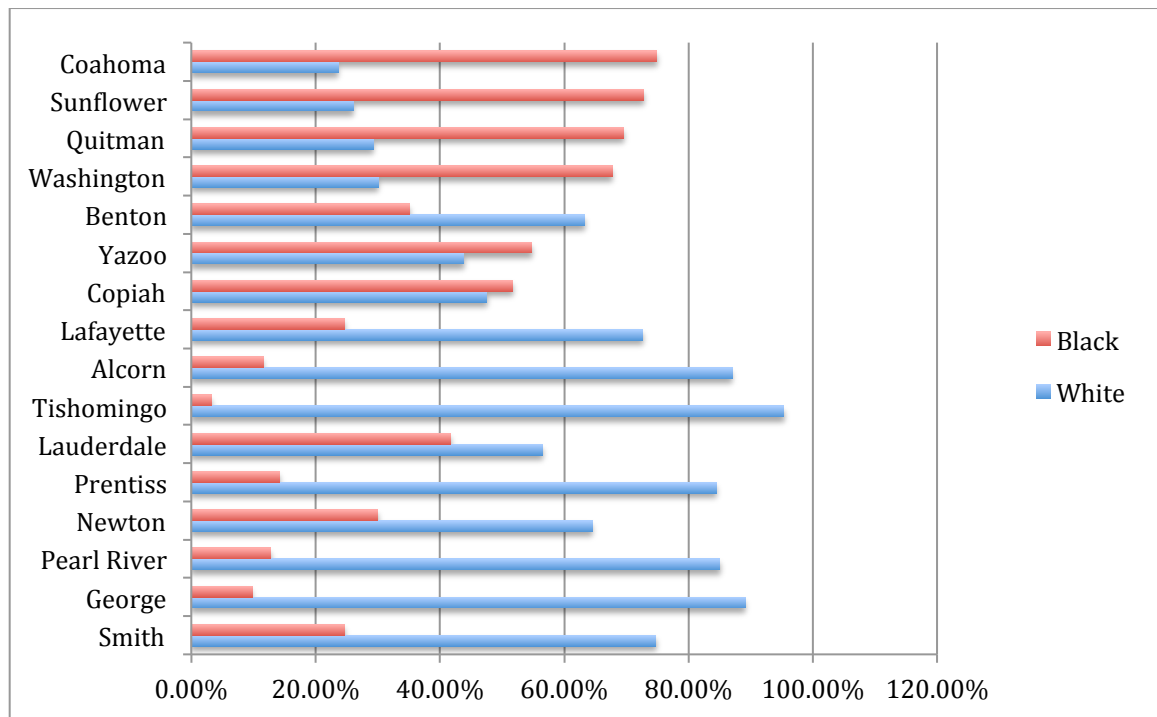
Sunflower had a population of 29,610 as of 2009. Of this population, 25.5 percent is 18 and under. 26.1 percent of the population is white, and 72.8 percent is black. The average household income is 28, 266 with a population density of 49.5. Of its population, 10, 770 are religious adherents. 6,390 citizens are Evangelical Protestants, 2,152 are black Protestants, and 2, 011 are mainline Protestants. 212 citizens are Catholics (ASARB, Houseal).

Coahoma had a population of 26, 936 as of 2009. Of this population, 30.6 percent is 18 and under. 23.6 percent of the population is white, and 74.9 percent is black. The average household income is 28, 320 with a population density of 55.3. Of its population, 15, 428 are religious adherents. 6,629 citizens are Evangelical Protestants,

5,454 are black Protestants, and 2, 375 are mainline Protestants. 935 citizens are Catholics (ASARB, Houseal).

Hypothesis One: Race

Table 3-A: Racial Makeup of Mississippi Counties Tested



Source: created using data from U.S. Census Bureau Data

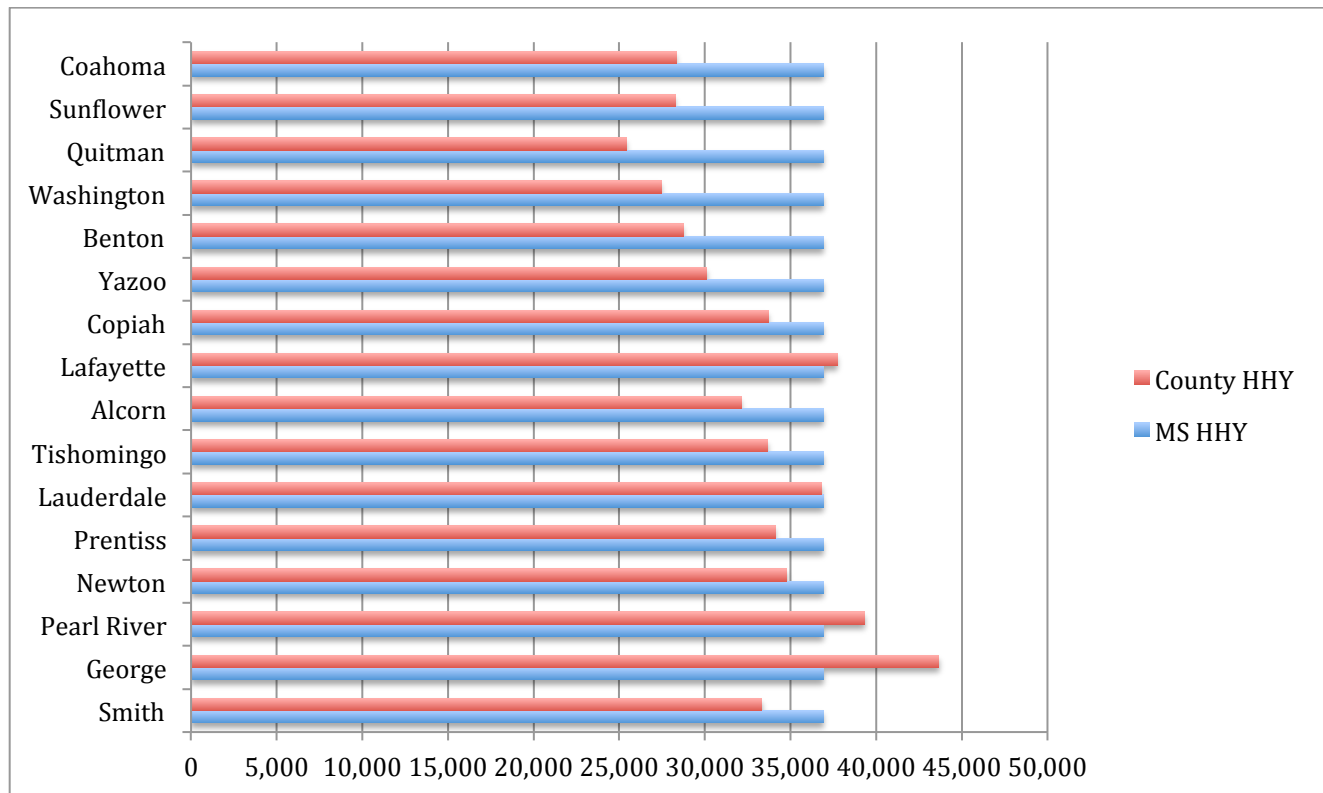
Table 3-A shows the racial makeup of the 16 Mississippi counties tested. Racial voting patterns are highly correlated to income-based voting in the Deep South. This correlation can also be expected in Mississippi counties. Higher black populations should indicate higher numbers of Democratic votes, and larger white populations should indicate higher numbers of votes for Republican candidates in presidential elections. The chart above compares the black and white populations of the 16 counties used for research. Based on race alone, Coahoma, Sunflower, Quitman, Washington, Yazoo, and Copiah should vote more Democratic. Coahoma should be the most Democratic of the counties tested based

on its percentage of black to white citizens. Benton, Lafayette, Alcorn, Tishomingo, Lauderdale, Prentiss, Newton, Pearl River, George, and Smith should vote more Republican. Tishomingo, based on race alone, should have the highest Republican percentage vote in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections.

H₁: Higher African American populations should cause higher Democratic votes in each county. Higher white populations should cause higher Republican votes in each county. According to readings presented in Chapter Two, racial issues should be more distinct in voting patterns than income at the local level.

Hypothesis Two: Rich and Poor State Divide

Table 3-B: County HHY Compared to Mississippi Average



Source: Census Data

Table 3-B compares the average household income of each county tested with the average Mississippi household income. Based on Gelman's rich-poor divide theory, income should be one of the greatest dividing factors in Mississippi counties' voting patterns. According to Gelman, richer states' voters are more divided on cultural ideologies. In poorer and more rural states, like Mississippi, income is more of a predictor of the vote (Hersch, Nall). It can be expected that counties with higher average incomes should be more Republican, and poorer counties should be more Democratic.

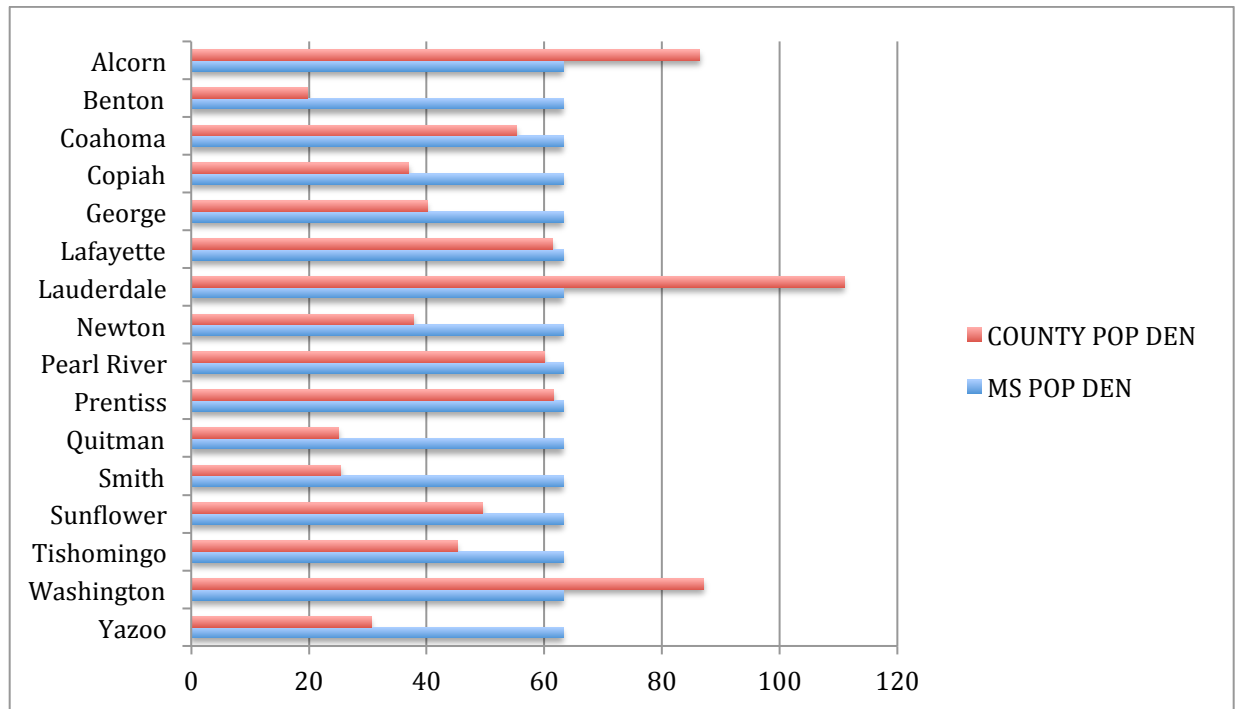
The higher the income levels of a county, the higher one can expect their Republican voting patterns to be. The lower the income rate of the county, the higher Democratic voting patterns can be expected. For example, George County's lower black population and higher income levels should lead to a substantially high Republican voting record in the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections. Pearl River, however, with a slightly higher black population and lower income level should vote slightly more Democratic than George County.

From the research presented in chapter two, it can be expected that George, Pearl River, and Lafayette County will have higher Republican voting records in the 2004 and 2008 Presidential elections than the state average. Quitman, based on its average household income alone, can be expected to have the lowest Republican voting percentage of the 16 counties tested.

H₂: Income should be one of the most significant predictors of votes in presidential elections based on Mississippi's high poverty levels. Higher income counties can be expected to vote more Republican while poorer counties should have more Democratic votes.

Hypothesis Three: Population Density's Effects

Table 3-C: County Population Density Compared to Mississippi Average



Source: Census Data

Table 3-C compares the population density of the 16 counties tested to the population density of Mississippi as a whole. According to Eitan Hersh and Claytong Nall's study of public voting records, the link between voting patterns and citizens' incomes is stronger in rural areas. In the Deep South, for sample, high levels of poverty and large African American populations contribute to the strength of income-party voting (Hersch, Nall). Based on this knowledge, population density should be a predicator for votes. In counties with higher population densities, for example, the relation between high incomes and Republican votes and low incomes and Democrats should be less pronounced than the patterns in rural counties.

From the research presented in chapter two, Lauderdale and Tishomingo should have less pronounced polarization in voting records than the remaining counties based on their higher population densities. Benton County, based on its population density alone, should have the most pronounced voting gap between Democrats and Republican.

H₃: Rural areas have more pronounced voting gaps than metropolitan areas. Counties with higher population densities' votes should be less polarized than counties with lower population densities.

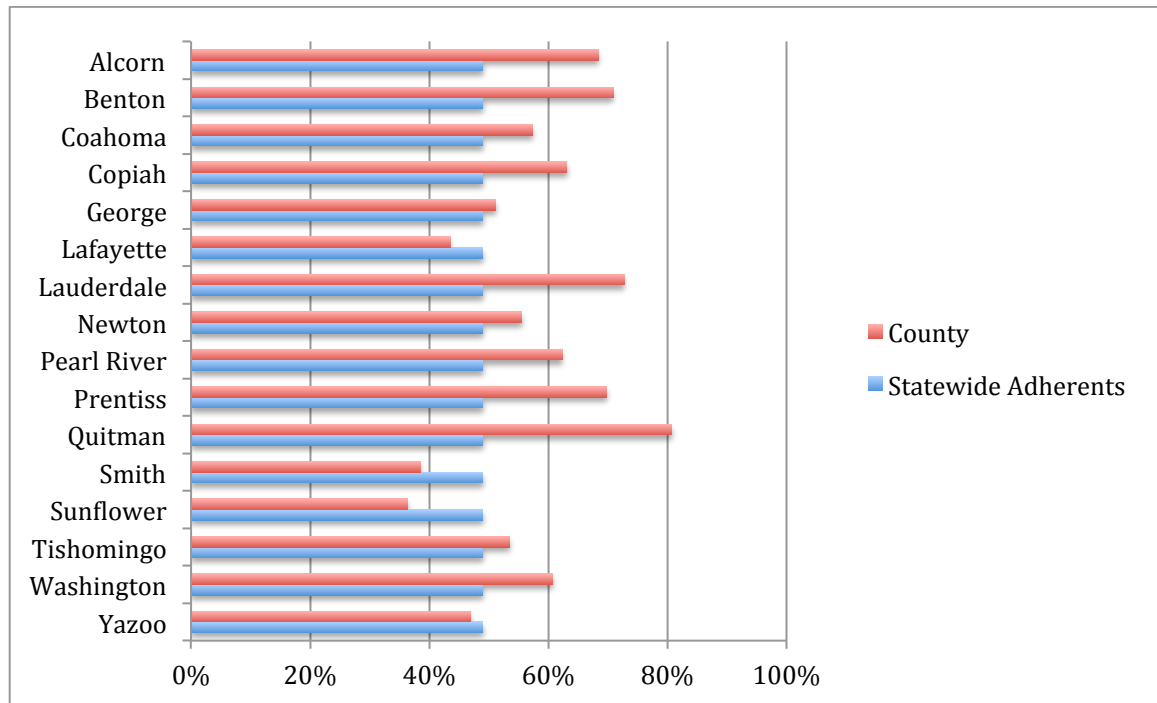
Hypothesis Four: Affect of Millennials

The trend of young voters to the Democratic Party has moved from almost evenly split in 2000 to a 45 percent to 26 percent split between the parties in 2008. Along with their voters, younger voters in the Democratic Party matched to Teixeira's theory in *Red, Blue and Purple America* that finds correlation between more liberal ideology and political activism. Based on this information, counties with higher populations of younger voters should have higher Democratic voting patterns or should at least narrow the Republican and Democratic divide within the county.

H₄: Counties with higher populations of young voters should have more Democratic votes.

Hypothesis Five: Religion

Table 3-D: Percent of County Adherence Compared to Mississippi Average



Source: created using data from ASARB and U.S. Census Bureau

Table 3-E: Religious Adherence in Mississippi Counties

County	Religious Adherents	Evangelical Protestants	Mainline Protestants	Black Protestants	Catholic
Alcorn	24,483	20,184	2,461	906	443
Benton	5,658	4,692	337	321	0
Coahoma	15,428	6,629	2,375	5,454	935
Copiah	18,355	12,630	2,704	2,231	280
George	11,613	8,631	1,970	397	369
Lauderdale	57,333	37,626	8,339	8,498	1,828
Lafayette	19,129	9,194	5,598	2,393	1,104
Newton	12,583	10,496	1,277	688	121
Quitman	6,777	3,126	2,316	1,335	0
Sunflower	10,770	6,390	2,011	2,152	212
Tishomingo	10,190	8,266	1,639	243	42
Washington	33,193	19,793	2,938	7,900	1,893
Yazoo	13,109	7,773	2,032	2,486	280
Smith	6,100	5,368	544	187	0
Pearl River	36,022	26,655	1,918	1,110	4,079
Prentiss	17,942	14,314	2,821	329	70

Source: created using data from ASARB.

Table 3-D compares the county adherence levels of the 16 counties to the average adherence level in Mississippi as a whole. Table 3-E shows the breakdown of adherents of each county among denominational lines. Based on the literature presented in chapter two, religious adherence is more indicative of voting patterns than denomination or

religion. As of 2004, 78.8 percent of evangelical Protestants voted for the Republican candidate in the 2004 presidential election (Green 63). Therefore, it can be expected that higher levels of evangelical Protestants within a county should cause the county to have higher GOP voting levels. Black Protestants groups and Catholics vote more Democratic on average. Therefore, one should expect higher Democratic voting patterns in counties with higher populations of black evangelical Protestants and Catholics. Higher levels of black evangelical Protestants and Catholics in counties, even if still in the minority, should decrease the landslide GOP votes in these counties. While these divides are to be expected, they could also be less apparent than expected as the conservative and liberal divide is less distinct among voters in more religious states like Mississippi (Gelman 130).

Based on the research presented in chapter two, Coahoma and Quitman should have significantly higher Democratic voting averages than the remaining counties based on their higher levels of black Protestants and mainline Protestants. The levels of Catholic voters in the counties are so low that they will have little significance on the voting patterns of the county as a whole.

H₅: Counties with higher Protestant adherent populations should vote more Republican while counties with higher Catholic and black Evangelical populations should vote more Democratic.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE BIG SORT OF A SMALL STATE'S RESULTS

Results from Race and Poverty Hypothesis:

Using binary correlations and linear regression patterns, the tests show that black populations and poverty levels were the largest predictors of the vote in 2004. Black populations were also one of the two highest predictors of the vote in the 2008 presidential election. African Americans and lower income citizens voted overwhelmingly for the Democratic candidate in all counties tested. White and higher income citizens voted in the majority for the Republican candidate in both elections. These results match Gelman's theory that the rich-poor divide is more evident in poorer states. Coahoma, the county with the highest African American population, also had the highest Democratic vote percentage at 64.2 percent in the 2004 presidential election. However, Tishomingo, the county with the lowest African American population did not have the lowest Democratic percentage in the 2004 election. Smith, with a 23.7 percent African American population had the lowest Democratic percentage vote in 2004 with a 21 percent Democratic vote in the county.

H₁: Black populations were the largest predictors of votes in the 2004 and 2008 election.

H₂: Income, highly connected with race in Mississippi, was one of the largest predictor of votes in the 2004 election. Income was narrowly replaced by millennial votes in the 2008 presidential election, but remains correlated with race as a predictor of voting patterns in the 2008 election as well.

Results from Population Density Hypothesis:

In the Mississippi counties tested, population density was not a predictor of votes in the 2004 or 2008 presidential elections.

H₃: Population density showed no significant results in the 2004 and 2008 presidential voting patterns of Mississippians.

Results from Millennial Hypothesis:

Youth votes were one of the largest predictors of the vote in the 2008 presidential election. The youth vote proved to be one of the strongest predictors of the vote in 2008 in association with the increase of youth votes nationally for Obama. Coahoma had the largest youth population of the counties tested and also had the highest Democratic percentage vote as expected.

H₄: Youth votes were the largest predictor of votes in the 2008 presidential election patterns in Mississippi. The youth vote, however, had no significant impact on the voting patterns of Mississippians in the 2004 election.

Results from Religion Hypothesis:

Religious adherence provided no significant affects on voting patterns in the 16 counties tested. While religious adherence was a significant factor in the South's voting patterns as a whole in the presidential election in 2004, race and poverty were the most significant predictors in Mississippi county level voting (Green 120).

H₅: Religion showed no significant results on Mississippi county-level voting patterns in the 2004 or 2008 Presidential elections.

CONCLUSION:

For all of Bishop's argument, when it comes to a place like Mississippi, the classical tales of race and income matter most. While *The Big Sort* gives us a guiding principle to understand Mississippi's rural politics, Bishop's self-segregation arguments, while strong in metropolitan areas, did not appear largely in the counties tested in Mississippi. Mississippi citizens overwhelmingly sorted based on race and household income levels in the 2004 election in the 16 counties tested. In the 2008 election, Mississippi citizens similarly sorted based on race and age, with the majority of the youth vote going to Obama. These political divisions are reminiscent of the Mississippi voting patterns at its foundation 200 years ago. The five hypotheses could have been tested at this time with virtually the same outcomes. In Mississippi, race and poverty remain the most dominant predictors of the vote. The races simply switched parties. While African Americans voted overwhelmingly Republican in the past, they now vote overwhelmingly Democratic. Similarly, the conservative label given to rich, white voters simply switched from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party.

Bishop's Big Sort theory is applicable at the national level based on citizens' freedom to move to a place that fits their ideological preferences. These preferences are theorized to amplify polarization among voters. In Mississippi, however, the old patterns of race and income are so strong that they overcome any other significant patterns that contribute to voting polarization. Mississippi's Big Sort occurs, in small measure, based

on the counties avoided based on their high levels of poverty. For example, white Mississippians rarely move to the Mississippi Delta because of its high poverty rates. Lower levels of education keep industry from moving to the area, driving up unemployment and furthering lower socioeconomic status. Furthermore, Mississippi's current place as 50th in average household income keeps out-of-state citizens from migrating to Mississippi in large enough numbers to significantly impact the status quo.

Mississippi's version of the Big Sort is a continuation of its old patterns. Change comes slow in Mississippi. Haley Barbour, the 63rd Governor of Mississippi stated, "We haven't had a partisan revolution in Mississippi. We've had an evolution. In retrospect, it seems like a natural progression, though it didn't feel like it along the way."⁸ The evolution, however, has not reached the heights of the former "Solid South." While Mississippi still remains a highly conservative state, the high levels of black voters within the state keeps the Republican Party from becoming a monopolizing force in state elections (Bullock 111). For example, High activism among black voters helped end a twenty-eight-year reign of the Republican Party in Tupelo, Mississippi, even with the county's majority white population (Bullock 111).

The divide among voters on race and poverty levels, however, does pose a potential problem for Mississippi's Democrats running for state House and Senate positions. White Republicans still hold tight to the conservative labels Reagan associated with the Republican Party and the liberal labels attached to Democrats (Nash 313). Nash states, "While those words would take on different meanings with different people, they gradually began to signify where the two parties stood on a broad range of cultural issues.

⁸ In an interview in 2006 with Jere Nash and Andy Taggart, authors of *Mississippi Politics: The Struggle for Power, 1976-2006*.

And for better or for worse, the overwhelming majority of white Mississippians are ‘conservative’ on all of them” (Nash 7). The Democratic Party in Mississippi will have to find a way to match the cultural standards associated with the national Democratic Party on abortion, affirmative action, and the separation of church and state without alienating conservative white voters to become an aggressive force in Mississippi elections (Nash 313-314). In an effort to attract more white voters, the Mississippi Democratic Party has attempted to distance itself from the more liberal cultural issues of the national Democratic Party. However, the party’s efforts showed little progress in attracting white voters (Nash 313). Black voters in Mississippi are also overwhelmingly conservative on the cultural issues listed above but remain associated with the Democratic Party based on economic and racial concerns (Nash 314). In order for either party to make significant changes to their current voting constituencies, each party must distance themselves from the labels placed on their national parties. Based on the slow changes associated with Mississippi’s politics of the past, it seems likely that Mississippi’s current political divide among parties based on race and economics will remain into the foreseeable future.

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